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PEOPLE

The country's population is composed mainly of Sesotho-speaking people. About 20 per cent of the population is of Nguni origin and the rest are smaller groups of San, Griqua, Zulu, Fingo, Pondo and N'debele. Only about 2,000 of the total population are of non-African descent, mainly Asian and European. Christian missionaries have strongly influenced the religious composition of the country. Most adhere to various Christian denominations, about 20 per cent to traditional African beliefs, and there is a small Moslem community. English and Sesotho are the two official languages while Afrikaans is also widely spoken.

GEOGRAPHY

Lesotho, sometimes called "the Switzerland of Africa", is a small, mountainous country completely surrounded by the Republic of South Africa. Because it lies entirely outside the tropics and is so high above sea level, it is virtually free from the tropical diseases that plague most other African countries. Most rain falls during the hot summer months between October and April. January is the hottest month. The winters are cold and dry with occasional light snow falling in the lowlands between June and August. Except in the mountains, the country is basically grassland. Only about 12 per cent of the total area is suitable for agriculture.

HISTORY

The kingdom of Lesotho, known in colonial times as Basutoland, became independent from Britain on October 4, 1966.

In 1818, following frequent and prolonged tribal warfare, Moshoeshe I, a chief of the Bakoena clan in the northern part of what is now Lesotho established a stronghold. After facing threats by other tribal groups and Dutch and Boer colonists Moshoeshe sought British help against these raiders. The British annexed Basutoland as it was then called in 1868. In 1871 the British annexed Basutoland to the Cape Colony. Dissention in the Cape Colony eventually developed into civil war and Britain resumed direct rule over Basutoland in 1884.

From 1884 to 1959 Basutoland was ruled by a British High Commissioner resident in South Africa. The Basutoland Congress Party, founded in 1952, was instrumental in pushing for the pre-independence constitution of 1964. The Freedom Party was founded in 1957. Other parties include the United Democratic Party and a small Communist Party was founded in 1962. The ruling Basuto National Party was founded in 1958.

An independence conference in June 1966 led to independence from Britain a few months later under a parliamentary system with a prime minister and King Moshoeshoe II as head of state.

ECONOMY

Lesotho's economy is extremely dependent on South Africa. Not only is Lesotho linked to South Africa by a customs and currency union but its policies are further influenced by its trade relations. South Africa purchases nearly all of its exports and in return provides most of Lesotho's manufactured goods and communication links by road, rail and air.

Lesotho is one of the 25 least developed nations in the world, according to the United Nations, so it is dependent on foreign aid for much of its development.

The country is faced with some major economic problems including poor natural resources, severe soil erosion and little fertile land. This situation is aggravated by overgrazing, soil exhaustion and lack of irrigation. The steady population growth has resulted in land holdings too small to adequately maintain the rural population. Due to a shortage of job opportunities, about 50 per cent of the male and 10 per cent of the female labor force is obliged to seek work in South Africa.

Agricultural production and animal husbandry dominate the economy and account for 50 per cent of domestic production. Maize, sorghum, wheat, beans and peas are the major crops. Almost 70 per cent of the population owns livestock. This results in a huge number of animals overgrazing on inadequate pastures. Wool from merino sheep and mohair from Angora goats are two of the country's main exports. Lesotho is the largest mohair producer in the world. Small deposits of diamonds are the only known source of mineral wealth.

Some industrial development has taken place, largely through the efforts of the Lesotho National Development Corporation. There are factories in the capital city of Maseru. Some of the industries include rug making, tapestry weaving, diamond cutting and polishing, pottery, jewelery making, building materials manufacture, tire retreading and candle making. At Maputsoe, factories manufacture clothing, electric light fittings, umbrellas and furniture. Tractors are also assembled and fertilizer is blended and packed. There are efforts to develop the tourist trade.

CANADIAN ASSISTANCE

Official Canadian development assistance to Lesotho began soon after independence in 1966. Since that time Canada has assisted with a variety of development projects and now is one of the major donors to Lesotho.

At first, Canadian assistance was concentrated on technical assistance. In the past few years, however, Canada has been involved in several major development programs. In conjunction with the World Bank, Canada launched a five-year rural development project to which it contributed \$6 million in Thaba Tseka, an area of slightly more than 52,000 hectares. Canada is now involved in expanding the project into new areas.

Some of Canada's recently-completed projects include a contribution of \$790,000 to a coal drilling study, a \$900,000 grant to support small-scale diamond mining, \$1.5 million to Phase I of the Basotho Enterprises Development Corporation and \$2.5 million for pilot training and the purchase of two Canadian-made Twin Otter aircraft for the Lesotho Airways Corporation. In mid-1978 Canada undertook a \$4 million urban infrastructure project to assist the Lesotho Housing Corporation to meet low-income housing needs through the provision of site and services support and the encouragement of people to build their own houses. Canada has also contributed technical and capital assistance to the University of Lesotho and training awards tenable at Canadian universities.

Canadian missionaries, since before the turn of the century, have made a significant contribution to running schools and health clinics and helped establish the forerunner to the University of Lesotho. Other Canadian voluntary organizations have also been active in Lesotho for many years.

Since 1966 the Canadian government--through CIDA -- has contributed approximately \$22.9 million in development assistance to Lesotho.

BILATERAL ASSISTANCE

The aim of CIDA's bilateral program in Lesotho has been to support that government's efforts to improve the quality of life for its citizens. In particular, CIDA has chosen the fields of manpower training and rural development as sectors of concentration.

Some current projects include:

Basotho Enterprises Development Corporation Phase II - \$8 million

This project, scheduled for completion in 1984, is helping to create employment opportunities through the promotion of small and medium-scale Basotho-owned enterprises. Canada's contributions include cooperants, training and capital costs.

Thaba Tseka Phase II - \$7.7 million

Thaba Tseka is an integrated rural development project located in the mountain district of Lesotho. After the initial provision of infrastructure, including roads, the project is now aimed at providing a variety of social services to assist in increasing the standard of living in the surrounding community.

National University of Lesotho Phase II - \$5 million

The World University Service of Canada (WUSC) is acting as the executing agent on behalf of CIDA to provide teaching staff and facilities to improve the quality of education at the university.

Training - \$1.8 million

This project provides sholarships for specialized training so that more Basotho can be employed in key sectors within the public service.

Lesotho National Development Corporation - \$600,000

The Lesotho National Development Corporation helps create employment by investing in local industries. CIDA assistance, scheduled to end in 1983, provides training awards to ensure local people are trained to take over all senior management positions.

Low income housing - \$3.4 million

This project supports the provision of sites and services in Maseru as an integral part of the national housing policy. CIDA funds are to provide basic infrastructure and loans to people wishing to construct homes within the project area. This project is scheduled for completion by 1984.

Diamond diggers cooperative - \$810,000

This project, scheduled for completion in 1984, provides employment for a group of small-scale diamond miners within the framework of a cooperative.

Mission Administered Funds (MAF)

This \$50,000 annual fund for small projects in Lesotho is administered through the nearest Canadian High Commission. The projects, usually initiated by community groups and voluntary organizations, provide economic, technical or social development assistance. No project may receive more than \$25,000 support from this fund. Some MAF-assisted projects in Lesotho have included: assistance to the St. Rodrigues Maternity Health Centre; a poultry project at St. Paul's High School; school furniture for Sefikeng Primary School; housing for handicapped women workers at Leribe Craft Centre; and the provision of children's furniture at the Lesotho National Library.

Multilateral and Regional Assistance

Among the United Nations and other multilateral agencies active in Lesotho to which CIDA contributes funds are the United Nations Development Program, the World Bank and the African Development Bank.

ASSISTANCE FROM CIDA'S SPECIAL PROGRAMS BRANCH

The assistance channels of the Special Programs Branch involve direct participation of Canadians in efforts to promote self-reliance and meet basic human needs in developing countries. Lesotho is currently receiving development assistance through the following programs of CIDA's Special Programs Branch:

Non-Governmental Organizations Division (NGO)

CIDA is currently funding 20 projects initiated by Canadian non-governmental organizations for a total CIDA contribution of \$287,981. The organizations are contributing a similar amount in support of the projects. The projects include an Inter Church Fund for International Development village health worker program, integrated rural development programs supported by Plenty Canada and secondary school scholarships funded by the Unitarian Service Committee.

Institutional Cooperation and Development Services Division (ICDS)

CIDA is currently co-funding a project under this program with World University Service of Canada to provide a generator for a community high school in Lesotho.

Voluntary Agricultural Development Aid (VADA)

The province of Saskatchewan, through the Saskatchewan Agricultural Development Corporation (AGDEVCO) with \$2.3 million support from this CIDA program, is undertaking a five-year integrated rural development program in Lesotho which includes technical assistance, identifying development needs, water supply and irrigation schemes and construction of buildings and bridges.

COUNTRY PROFILE

Official name	Kingdom of Lesotho
Capital	Maseru
Area	30,000 sq. km.
Population (1980)	1,339,000
Population density	44.6 people per sq. km.
Population growth rate (1970-79)	2.3%
Official language	English
Significant dates	
1868	Basutoland becomes a British protectorate.
October 4, 1966	Basutoland attains independence as the Kingdom of Lesotho.
Life expectancy at birth (1979)	51 years
Infant mortality rate (age 0-1)	114 per 1,000 live births
Daily per capita calorie supply as percentage of requirement (1977)	99%
Percentage of population with access to safe water (1975)	17%
Adult literacy rate	52%
Currency	Rand
GNP per capita (1979)	U.S. \$340
Inflation rate (1979)	13.2%
Percentage of labor force in:	
agriculture	87%
industry	4%
services	9%

Main exports	Wool, mohair, diamonds	
Exports to Canada (1980)	Basic hardware	\$ 38,000
	Foods and materials for foods	\$ 21,000
	Inedible end products	\$ 6,000
	Other	\$ 32,000
	<u>Total*</u>	<u>\$ 97,000</u>
Imports from Canada (1980)	Dairy produce, eggs and honey	\$ 390,000
	Drilling, excavating, mining machinery	\$ 224,000
	Apparel and apparel accessories	\$ 97,000
	Other	\$1,233,000
	<u>Total*</u>	<u>\$1,944,000</u>

* Included within this total are the figures for Botswana and Swaziland.

Sources: World Development Report 1981, published by the World Bank.
Atlasco faits et chiffres 1981/82, published by Le Nouvel
Observateur.
Population and Vital Statistics, published by the United Nations.
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Reference Bureau Inc.
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